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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to present a new approach to teaching a creative writing sequence for high school students. During the first 45-day course, over 30 papers are to be written. Students begin with a paper titled "I Am" and proceed through a series of self-discovery papers. The papers give the students a chance to understand self-expression and time to gain confidence in presenting their ideas. Students achieving a quarter grade of A or B are entitled to enter either Creative Writing 2 or Creative Writing 3. Creative Writing 2 is a poetry class in which students explore such forms as tonka, haiku, triad, ten-liners, and experimental approaches. Creative Writing 3 is a short story and drama writing course in which dialogue plays a major part. Creative Writing 4 is open to those students who have achieved a quarter grade of A in Creative Writing 1 and 2. This course involves independent work as well as peer teaching of Creative Writing 1 and 2. Creative Writing 5 is open to all advanced creative writing students. The function of this class is to direct a schoolwide poetry, short story, and short essay contest. (TS)

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CREATIVE WRITING...A NEW CURRICULUM

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CS 202 061

CREATIVE WRITING...A NEW CURRICULUM

The purpose of this paper is to present a new approach to our English Program. Much has been stated regarding the unstructured value of a Creative Writing course. Most teachers seem to feel students should be allowed the freedom to open their minds, expand their emotions, and express their true feelings. The academically-oriented child may explore without limitation his own depths. The slower student, handicapped by the success factor, may find he does after all have something genuinely important to say, drawing from his own background and experience.

I do not claim this to be a composition course of a scholastic "college-prep" sort. Indeed, I have asked that it not be included in the basic skill division of my own local school's program.

The students at La Serna High School in Whittier, California, have been selecting courses from thirty-five English offerings in a quarter system. The requirements include:

1. Freshman Orientation, Grammar, and Composition,
2. A Basic Skills class each year, and
3. Two courses in American Literature.

Creative Writing has not been listed as a Basic Skills class and it does not meet an American Literature requirement, still it is one of the most popular courses on the campus. Virtually every student, at one time in his four years of registration through a student selective system, elects to enroll in Creative Writing 1, the first of five courses that comprise the Creative Writing program. The student who finds writing a very real part of his life may continue in Independent Study and the Teacher Aid Program.

I like Eve Miriam's poem stating...

Don't be polite.
Bite in.
Pick it up with your fingers and lick the juice that
may run down your chin.
It is ready and ripe now, whenever you are.
You do not need a knife or fork or spoon
or plate or napkin or table cloth.
For there is no core
or stem
or rind
or pit
or seed
or skin
to throw away.

This poem applies to writing. This is the moment to say what is in the mind, in the heart. Tomorrow will be too late. Yesterday will be forgotten. Now is the time to say "I feel..."

It is a joy to see students grasp this idea and cry with Emily in Our Town, "Oh, life, you're too wonderful for anyone to truly realize you!" or with Edna St. Vincent Millay, who screams, "Oh, world, I cannot hold you close enough!" As the students see their chance to communicate through pen and paper their love of life, their bitterness and frustration, their concerns and delights, it remains only for the teacher to sit back and watch the unfolding of many tiny buds.

The students are made aware immediately that this class will not strive to correct every grammatical, structural, or spelling error. This class allows for freedom of expression...ideas are to be shared... emotions are to be felt. What one writes will be dictated by who he is; his background, his experience, his sensory consciousness of his surroundings will cause him to bring something unique to his own work. Each person's individuality is stressed. All will write differently... haltingly, profusely, fearfully, joyously, inarticulately, eloquently, bitterly or angrily, lovingly...but all have something important to be said. By sharing a part of themselves, they will discover new depths in their own lives. No one can really fail, unless he does not try.

Effective and affective writing are both goals, but the "affective" or lasting quality of imparting elements of humanity to one's work is of primary significance. Of course, the manner of presentation, the "effectiveness", cannot be underestimated. It is just that in this program, students are urged first to write, to think, to feel, and to share...then skills may refine what it is they have to say.

Elements of creativity are explored and definitions are reviewed. Ray Bradbury states that creativity is a "re-organization of old thoughts." We define the creative person as one who has individuality, intelligence, independence, aesthetic sensitivity in that he is open to his conscious and unconscious surroundings; he is filled with psychic turbulence, is fascinated by complexities, and hates routine. Intuitive and motivated, he loses his fear of mistakes, disapproval, and separateness. Filled with positive tension, he is ready for any challenge.

This may seem lofty in concept, but it is truly practical in application. Thus, the student learns that whenever he devises a new order for old ideas, he is being creative. Creativeness is innate to all men in varying degrees. To be alive...to be aware leads always to creativity.

Students should be allowed to write and think freely without the fear of the red desiccation of their papers. They are entitled to encouragement and should be able to play with words, linking them together into many interesting and stimulating patterns.

In the February 1975 issue of the English Journal, Ken Styles and Gary Cavanaugh have stated optimum conditions for quality learning. These include:

1. Structure with flexibility
2. Clearly defined expectations with freedom of choice
3. Student autonomy and responsibility
4. Specific commitment with opportunity for creativity
5. Self-discipline with peer interaction
6. Teacher direction with self-direction
7. Peer discipline with peer interaction
8. Study of core materials with individualized projects
9. Organization determined by the interaction of teacher and students.

This is what the new curriculum in Creative Writing provides!

This program could more readily be grouped within the fine arts department. It encourages artistic endeavor. The teacher must be enthusiastic in the course, reveal flexibility, relate well with students, know the teaching methods and how to implement them, and must have a fine degree of sensitivity, for encouragement and understanding are essential to success. Patience, energy and time to read and comment on papers are definite requirements.

Students hear reiterated often: "There are three threats to creativity...1. LACK OF DISCIPLINE,
2. OVERPRACTICE, AND
3. FALLING INTO A RUT.

To guard against these demons, it is understood that reasonable deadlines must be met, that truthful comments suggesting problem areas and offering encouragement will be given, and that routine should be shunned. All are urged to sit in a different seat, vary the size and shape of paper, use differnet styles and techniques, vary ink and paper color, and use any other artistic flairs.

There are many audiences that the student must reach, and he may slant and change his work for each audience.

1. A daily journal is for self-expression; it has individual appeal.
2. Daily suggested assignments are open for peer comment.
3. Five papers (those considered most "affective") are submitted for teacher approval.
4. Outstanding material is held for annual student publication and the local school contest.
5. Eloquent work, showing mastery of technique and emotion, is submitted for magazine publication, individual collections, and multiple contests held throughout the country.

It is truly rewarding to see the youth take pride in reaching each audience successfully.

Creative Writing 1 is a class open to all students. Past performance is of no consequence. I repeat that even the least successful student has something unique from his background and experience to contribute. This is the time for "fooling around" with words and technique. Over the forty-five day course, over thirty papers are written. Friday is often used as a catch-up day or for sharing orally the week's better papers. I have included a list of possible assignments, all of which may be treated in an individualistic manner. Students begin with a paper entitled "I AM" and proceed through a series of self-discovery papers. The goals are variety, a chance to see that there are hundreds of tricks to aid one in self-expression, and a time to gain confidence and pride in presenting one's ideas. Grammatical, structural, and spelling errors are not stressed, although they are marked. No single paper receives a letter or number grade; comments are often as extensive as the paper itself. Revision for added appeal is applauded for it does show initiative. Students work in small groups, and quiet conversation is often encouraged.

The student who escapes the threats to creativity...who is self-disciplined, who seeks aid but not praise, who displays ingenuity in assignments...is then encouraged to progress to level two in the program.

If a student achieves a quarter grade of an A or B, he is entitled to enter Creative Writing 2 or Creative Writing 3. Both these advanced classes stress the goals met in Creative Writing 1, but now grammar, syntax, spelling, and vocabulary are all of definite significance. These students must show a level of excellence in their journals and daily work. Again groups are devised, papers are non-graded, but continual surveillance is maintained to spot trouble areas for students which may need close teacher supervision.

Creative Writing 2 is a poetry class where students explore unique forms such as the tonka, haiku, triad, 10-liners, and other experimental approaches. Meter and rhyme are taught exhaustively and each student must attempt some proficiency in each. Formalized patterns such as sonnet, ode, and ballad are studied and written. Blank verse and free verse are defined and attempted. Figures of speech are required elements in the writing. Again, approximately thirty poems are written by each student to a varying degree of success, but all of the Creative Writing 2 students leave with an appreciation of what a poet must bring to his art.

Creative Writing 3 is a short story and drama writing course in which dialouge plays a major part. Theme, character, scene, plot and its elements, point of view, and style are analyzed. Unity and development are the key points. Magazinesare reviewed to slant of material. Five or six stories or dramas are required for the quarter's work. These do receive a letter grade by the teacher.

Creative Writing 4 is the class designed to turn the wheels of all the other classes. Without it, the program would fail miserably. Here are the outstanding young writers, who have in two preceeding courses received the grade of an A. They are here naturally enough to continue their own writing, their own journals, but also they are anxious to share their enthusiasm and new-found knowledge with peers newly-enrolled in Creative Writing. Now, instead of one teacher reading daily 150 student papers, leading ultimately to exhaustion, lack of creativity, and utter pandemonium, there are several peer teachers. Creative Writing 1,2, and 3 can now be divided into groups, each group working with a particular skilled young writer. I have had as many as twenty-five peer teachers in a quarter. I now have ten Creative Writing 4 students but am only teaching two Creative Writing classes. These peer teachers are able to cull much of the work and enable the teacher to see a few examples of the best work by each student. The love of writing becomes infectious and the students continue to enroll to try their skill at this series of courses. If they did not do so, the program would become non-existant. For four years, this program has operated smoothly, and there is always a new core group to take the lead.

Creative Writing 4 follows specific directions:

DO:
- Mark grammar
- Set an example (quiet atmosphere)
- Build rapport
- Be patient
- Be punctual in grading
- Keep accurate records

DON'T:
- PLAY GOD
- Be late
- Be absent needlessly

1. See that assignments are understood by each student.
2. Collect, read, comment, and mark the papers.
3. Mark student activity and daily grade on the calendar.
4. Keep student work in student folders in the classroom.
5. Record assignments as submitted by each student on the form provided.
6. Submit the most outstanding efforts to the teacher.
7. Don't overpraise; don't be supercritical. Be extensive in comments and make at least one positive remark about the paper. You're here to positively reinforce the student.

Many peer teachers become so involved in this role that they continue on by signing up as a teaching assistant through the Independent Study Program run by the school. Seldom, if a student has made an A in two classes, is his work as a teaching aid unsatisfactory. If, however, this should occur, the student is immediately removed. The success of the program lies in the degree of

sophistication with each additional level of achievement. There is no room for the clown, the disruptive influence, in Creative Writing 4.

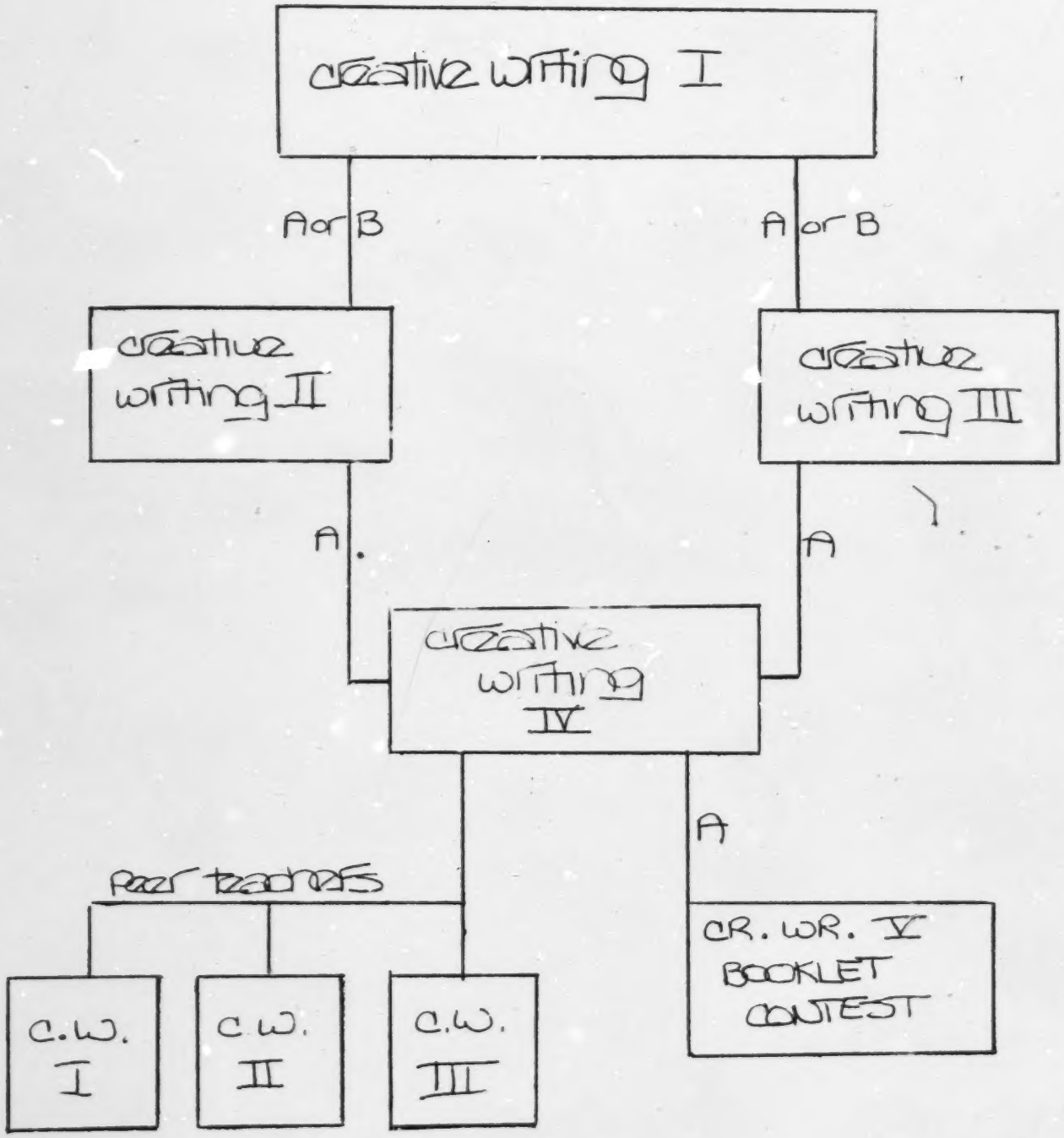
Once a year, during one class hour, a Creative Writing 5 course is offered. It is open to all Advanced Creative Writing Students. The function of this class is to direct a school-wide contest in poetry, short story, and short essay. One graduate student, one teacher, and one parent stand as judges. Trophies are awarded to the winners in first, second, and third place in each division at the school annual award night. Winning entries and all exceptional work throughout the year are presented in the annual student publication. The Creative Writing 5 class spends the last quarter sorting, seeking revision, arranging, illustrating, typing, organizing by genre, author, or theme, duplicating, collating, and assembling the worthy examples of that year's writing. We now have three such copyrighted publications.

The La Serna Student Body has also reached the publishing audience. Students have won the California Chapparal contest, honorable mention in the international Guidepost Contest, placement in the Literary Cavalcade, first place in the local, district, and state levels of the Lion's Club Speech Contest, and some have had their work published in the National Poetry Press, the magazine Hyacinths and Biscuits, and the Reader's Digest. One graduate has gone into film-writing, at least three others have journalism scholarships, and several are determined to pursue a writing career.
The versatile talent of the acknowledged writing student has often been requested for programs, dance backgrounds, and other community services. Encouragement and a little probing are needed to assure entries into contests, but even the attempt lends the students participating an element of confidence and pride.
We are also fortunate to have a local Writer's Club that is anxious to include the youth among their membership. One boy had his poetry published for his graduation present. At least four otner students have done compilations of their work and published their own poetry manuals. Several others have the sincere desire to do so.

I believe this program illustrates Thoreau's statement:

> "A written word is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and more universal than any other work of art. It is the work of art closest to life itself. It may...not only be read, but actually breathed from all human lips ...not be represented on canvas or in marble only, but be carved out of the breath of life itself."

This chart shows the interaction of the five Creative Writing Courses.



On a calendar, the daily attitude and achievement is recorded.

7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13

April

May

June

Each three week period, one of these record sheets is submitted with student folders.

class _____

t.a. _____

period _____

	attendance	M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	
1																
2																
3																
4																
5																
6																
7																
8																
9																
10																
	assignments															
1																
2																
3																
4																
5																
6																
7																
8																
9																
10																

The following are course capsules written to acquaint the prospective student with the Creative Writing Program.

Creative Writing 1

At last, a different class! A real chance to be creative! Here students find time to express their deeper thoughts through daily writings and the keeping of a journal. The "muse" or creative spirit of each student is fed a banquet rich in daily experience and vicarious reading. Challenging exercises present and aid in the understanding of forms, styles, and techniques of writing. Imagination is the key word; grades are de-emphasized. Each individual will study, imitate, and develop style through repeated writing, criticism, and discussion.

Creative Writing 2

Do you love to write poetry? This is your course. A chance to be creative, an opportunity to study form and techniques--both are offered in the course. This is a must for the dedicated writer. Prerequisite: A or B in Creative Writing 1.

Creative Writing 3

Another creative course! Here the student is encouraged to study and develop on his own the elements of a short story and then to combine them into a final story or stories demonstrating his own talent in words. Prerequisite: A or B in Creative Writing 1.

Creative Writing 4

Self-discipline displayed in earlier courses is rewarded in this class where those with imagination and ability are further encouraged. This is a very special course designed for the outstanding student in Creative Writing 1, 2, and 3. This group of students will continue to writein the form they desire, analyze papers, prepare units of exercise, and aid in the instruction of the other Creative Writing classes. Prerequisite: An A in Creative Writing 1 and an A in Creative Writing 2 or 3.

NOTE: All Creative Writing courses will be offered simultaneously during the same hour in the same classroom by the same teacher.

STATED GOALS OF THE CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM

We are committed to helping every student:

1. Establish an involvement in daily creative writing about surroundings and life experiences, learning techniques through analysis of professional writings.
2. Develop self-discipline in writing.
3. Learn to express freely personal attitudes, feelings, and emotions using the written medium.
4. Enhance the desire to express one's own thoughts creatively through written words
5. Write unified, coherent prose.
6. Improve mechanics and content in writing.
7. Develop a definition of creativity and understand the threats to creativity.
8. Learn the definition of plagarism.
9. Learn to identify, locate, and write examples of various genre, points of view and devices.
10. Gain self-confidence through acceptance of peer and teacher criticism and opinions, and oral reading of work.

Specifically applied to Creative Writing 4:

11. Continue to demonstrate self-discipline in writing and to improve through continued writing and revision, sentence structure, paragraph form, punctuation, spelling, and content.
12. Demonstrate previously gained knowledge through continual analysis of peer papers, presentation of units to peers, and individualized tutoring when peers need specific instruction.
13. Demonstrate critical judgment by selecting outstanding works from all Creative Writing classes for publication.
14. Demonstrate a willingness to aid in any manner to make the Creative Writing Program more effective.

CREATIVE WRITING I

1. I am...
2. Name Poem
3. Experiences (write three)
4. Sensory description of a place (use all five senses)
5. I see you never...
6. Describe a color
7. Write a paper with a six year old viewpoint
8. Build a story with a surprise ending
9. Become an inanimate object
10. Letter to Mom and Dad
11. Life on La Serna Campus 100 years from now.
12. "The Games People Play"
13. Rewrite your favorite song in your own words
14. Given 5 objects, put them in a story
15. I wish...
16. Write your epitaph
17. Write something; poem or prose, and make a collage or drawing to go with it.
18. Conversation with God
19. Given the first line of a famous novel, write a story around it
20. Write a story about the "Clay"
21. Become an emotion
22. Your vision of heaven of hell
23. Tell the thoughts of someone that was buried alive
24. Write two dialogues 1. Telling the Pres. his zipper is down
    2. Telling a small child his mother is dead.
25. Write an article on "How To Cut School"
26. Write 20 reasons why you hate or dislike someone without saying "I hat you"
27. Write what color pain is and why
28. Antithesis
29. What would you do if you have three days to live
30. Pretend you are 34 and tell why you are running away from home
31. Write three views on the same subject
32. How do you feel when you're half in the shade and half in the sun
33. Write a paper titled "I remember" or "I remember when!
34. Journal
35. Evaluation of Class

Experience Papers You may fictionalize if you wish!

The first time that I ran away from home
My laughing place
Learning to whistle
My favorite relative
The first time that I shaved
First time you said "Amen" after the flag salute
First time you can remember getting into trouble at school
My most frustrating moment
First bone that I fractured
The teacher that I disliked most
My first day in the seventh grade locker room
The happiest day in my life
The day my zipper broke
My first phone call (or encounter with) the opposite sex
The first teacher I fell in love with
My first real date
My most embarrassing moment in school
I was so scared when...
The first time that I won anything
My first black eye
My first haircut
The first time that I put on make-up and heels
My first school field trip
The one incident that changed the direction of my life
The pet you enjoyed having the most and why
The first time that you were sent to the principal's office
The first time that you were really hurt
Your reaction to the first monster movie that you ever watched
The first day that you walked hom from school alone
Your first camping trip
The first time you drank something stronger than milk
The day your dog ran away
The first time you had to memorize a poem and recite it
Your first spanking
The day I called my teacher MOM
My first visit away from home
My favorite trip
My greatest influence
My best friend
Pride I have in my background

These are only suggestions; you are free to use others!

Dialogues: Include: Setting(narration), Characters (show relationship), Basic situation, Crisis, Emotion, and Social Significance, if possible.

Two indignant people in a telephone conversation
Student and father over report card
Two sisters discussing a borrowed dress
Two friends meeting over a several year separation
Two people discussing a book, class, movie, etc.
Student trying to persuade parent to let him go somewhere
Two friends having a disagreement
Two people...one telling the other of his win or loss
Boyfriend and girlfriend...one breaking up with the other
Two friends saying goodbye
Student explaining to parent the circumstance of "being busted"
Son or daughter explaining to mother why he/she wasn't at a party an an expected time
Two sisters discussing boys
Two brothers discussing girls

CREATIVE WRITING II

1. Introductory Writing
2. 10 line poem on self
3. Name Poem
4. Noun Poem
5. Haiku
6. Tankas
7. Limericks
8. Triads
9. Cinquains
10. One Hand Clapping...
11. Free Verse
12. Synonyms
13. What If...
14. Never Been Written Before
15. I Used To...
16. Grooks
17. I Wish...
18. Similes & Metaphors
19. Personification
20. Shape Poem
21. Apostrophic
22. Flower Poem
23. Epigram
24. Time Poem
25. Didactic
26. Lyrical Revision
27. Parody
28. Imagry
29. Ode or Epitaph
30. Allusion
31. 10 Words
32. Season Poem
33. Reflective Poems--emotions or rememberances
34. Sonnet
35. Ballad

** Journal

1. Character sketch: Describe a classmate using the outline given; consider age, walk, mannerisms, thoughts, activities, speech, background, surroundings, emotions, your thoughts about him/her, comments about him/her, beliefs, attitudes, and obsessions.
2. Dialogue: A conversation between two or more people or things. (Examples: Frost "Death of a Hired Man" and Hemingway "The Killers".) Must have a setting, characters, narrative, climax, and social significance.
3. Setting: Begin with an outline for describing a particular place and time. Include feeling. List ten of each sense. Then use these descriptive adjectives in a complete setting.
4. Review the six-page outline on story writing handed out at beginning of course.
   Plot outlines always include: situation
   conflict (internal-external)
   climax (emotion - catharsis)
   denouement
   theme or purpose
   Develop character, scene, and dialouge in detail.
   Remember: appropriate title; don't use you; use the senses; have a good beginning!
5. Story suggestions. Six stories are to be submitted during the course.
   Modern day children's story.
   Nursury tale in another style A) Biblical B) Hemingway C) Radical
   Myth or Morality play
   Hated and Loved characters meet
   Single emotion or effect created
   Story developed from beginning sentences of several classics.
   Historical Biography...locate at least fifty facts first
   Futuristic setting: people,values, art, society, government, architecture, ecology
   Blend a given set of five objects into one story.
   Choose a color, order, light, object, emotion, statement, movement and combine these into one story
   Use Dear Abby or a news article as a springboard for a story.
   Three views of the same incident
   Write several beginning paragraphs: mystery, pathetic, school, humorous, tragic, action, character, description